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The Position of Children in the German Welfare State and New Strategies of Fighting Child Poverty

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The Position of Children in the German Welfare State and New Strategies of Fighting Child Poverty

1. Introduction

With my lecture I try to analyse the position that children have in the German welfare state. Due to the high rate of child poverty this general question is focused on the material living conditions of this population group. A current UNICEF study shows that Germany belongs with a child poverty rate of 10.9% to the middle field of the analysed OECD countries (cf. UNICEF 2007: 42). The problem in Germany is that the child poverty rate is increasing since years – or as Corak, Fertig and Tamm point out: “[...] not only has the child poverty rate increased in Germany during the last decade or so, it is also increased more than the rate for the overall population” (Corak/Fertig/Tamm 2005: 8). From a generational perspective children in Germany (especially children in single-parent households and children with migration background) form the population group that is affected the most by poverty (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 2006, Becker/Hauser 2003).

Focusing the analysis on the material living conditions of children is not only because of the poverty problem itself. Also the shift of the welfare state paradigm in Germany is crucial for this focus. This shift was initiated at the end of the 1990’s and is primarily based on the idea of an „activating social policy“ and the concept of a “social investment state”. Whereas activating social policy is aimed at integrating the entire population into the labour market and to increase the rate of the “productive” parts of the population, the idea of the „social investment state“ conceptualises children as a central target group. In accordance to this role of children in the social investment thinking the German Federal Government propagates to secure a decent standard of living for all children, to “fight the causes of child poverty and to enable ways out of living circumstances at the risk of poverty” (BMFSFJ 2006: 60; translation M.H.). This eager intention and the strategies of fighting child poverty deriving from this are analysed from a child-centred point of view. With this analysis it is intended to gain information for a social policy which can be useful to improve the justice of resources between the generations.

However, the intention of my lecture goes beyond only presenting findings. Due to the fact that the ongoing adultism in welfare state research causes a neglect of child-oriented questions in this research area and because childhood research only rarely deals with welfare state issues I also try to illustrate how analyses of children’s position in a welfare state can be arranged. Therefore I structure the presentation as follows: First I introduce the basis of my analysis. Herein I explain how I use the new sociology of childhood as theoretical

approach and the UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as normative background. In the second part I develop the analytic frame by introducing the concept of mixed welfare production and the theory of citizenship. As third I give a short insight into the object of analysis: the position of children in the German welfare state, as it is represented in the current state of research in this field. Afterwards I present the findings of this analysis and give a short conclusion.

2. Basis of Analysis

As mentioned above the research question concerning the position of children in the German welfare state is on the scientific level rooted in the ‚new sociology of childhood‘ and on the normative level in the UN-Convention on the rights of the child.

2.1 New sociology of childhood

The approach of the ‚new sociology of childhood‘ forms a new paradigm in the socio-scientific understanding of children and childhood since the early 1990’s (cf. e.g. Qvortrup et al. 1994, James/Prout 1990). Traditional sociological research left the social construction of children and childhood to developmental psychology and educational science. More than 20 years ago the US-American sociologist Barrie Thorne asks the question where children are in sociological theory and gives the following answer: “When studied at all, their lives and experiences have been ghettoized in a few subfields – the family, education or the socialisation portion of social psychology” (Thorne 1985: 695-696). Most of the sociological research did only focus on children and childhood to analyse how societal order is reproduced. Children were first of all defined as ‘becomings’.

In contrast to this, the new sociology of childhood defines children as “beings” – as competent social actors and active co-constructors of the social world. Childhood is not only seen as a preparation phase of future adulthood but as a permanent category and integral part of society. The research focus of this approach lies directly on children and their social interactions as well as on the societal parameters which influence childhood. These parameters include economics, social life, politics, culture, ideology, etc. and hence the same parameters that have an influence on other societal groups and forms. Therefore it becomes relevant to move beyond the analysis of the distribution of societal resources and power via classical variables like gender, ethnicity and social class. From a generational perspective it is of interest to figure out differences between generational groups such as adults and children (cf. Qvortrup 2005).

Although since almost two decades this construction of children and childhood forms a paradigm in the field of childhood research and international projects like „Childhood as a

Social Phenomenon“ and COST A 19 „Children's Welfare“ were performed, the statement of the Italian researcher Giovanni Sgritta is true that there are still huge gaps in the understanding how changes in the societal system and in policy influence the living conditions of children (cf. Sgritta 2005: 60).

2.2 UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child

Parallel to the development in the sociological childhood research the UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was passed in November 1989. In the 54 articles of the CRC Children are constituted as active and participative members of society and autonomous claims-makers on societal resources in the here and now. Although there is still some developmental perspective, which some researchers regard as problematic, the CRC can be understood as a „landmark in the history of childhood“ (Freeman 1996: 85) respectively as a „turning point in the international movement on behalf of children's rights“ (Smith/Taylor 2000: 12).

With regard to the material living conditions of children and child poverty as focal points of this presentation two articles of the CRC are relevant in particular: Article 26 ‚Social Security‘ and Article 27 ‚Decent standard of living‘. In Article 27 the state parties “recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development” (UNICEF 1989: 8). However, “parents or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development” (UNICEF 1989: 8). The state shall “assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing¹” (UNICEF 1989: 8). Although the autonomous right of the child to a decent standard of living is clearly mentioned, it is also obvious that parents are seen as primarily responsible, whereby the state's responsibility is arranged in a subsidiary manner.

In paragraph 1 of Article 26 CRC it is mentioned that all state parties explicitly shall recognize the right of every child “to benefit from social security, including social insurance“ and shall „take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law“ (UNICEF 1989: 8), while paragraph 2 of this article states that the benefits should be taking into account the “resources and the circumstances of the child and persons having responsibility for the maintenance of the child, as well as any other consideration relevant to an application for benefits made by or on behalf of the child” (UNICEF 1989: 8).

¹ The focus on nutrition, clothing and housing represents basic needs. As Thomas Olk and Helmut Wintersberger point out “this makes sense for those countries of the world where almost 90% of children live, while for most European countries a literal interpretation of this wording would not fully correspond to the spirit of the CRC” (Olk/Wintersberger 2007: 65).

Although the second paragraph leaves much space for interpretation it is clearly mentioned that safeguarding the access to social security is an autonomous right of children, which has to be guaranteed by the state. Following Thomas Olk and Helmut Wintersberger a basic income for children via direct monetary transfers would be the appropriate consequence of these rights as fixed in the Articles 26 and 27 (cf. Olk/Wintersberger 2007: 69).

The German Federal Republic has signed the CRC as one of the first members of the UN in January 1990 (the ratification by the German Bundestag was in February 1992). In doing so the German state has committed to „undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention” (UNICEF 1989: 2). Therefore, in this research the CRC is understood as „a comprehensive framework of civil, political, cultural, social, economic and humanitarian standards against which legislation, policies and practices can be measured and their ongoing compliance monitored“ (Smith/Taylor 2000: 12). Thus, the following question can be raised: *What position do children have in the German welfare state concerning measures to secure their material living conditions?*

3. Analytic Framework

To analyse the position of children in the German welfare state it is necessary to develop an appropriate analytic framework. This framework is based on the fact that the German state is constituted as a “democratic and social federal state” via Article 20 Paragraph 1 of the constitution. Expressed in sociological terms the German state is a welfare state. Following the common definition of a welfare state² the analytic framework includes:

- *responsibility of the state for the welfare of its citizens*
- social rights of the citizens within the state.

For this reason two concepts are applicable to form the analytic framework: the concept of mixed welfare production and the theory of citizenship.

3.1 Concept of ‘Mixed Welfare Production’

Welfare is one of the “highest values in modern societies and refers primarily to the living conditions and the perceived life quality of individuals and families” (Zapf 1984: 263). A concept of welfare that can be used for empirical research is propagated by the Finish sociologist Erik Allardt. This concept includes objective welfare values as well as subjective evaluations (attitudes). The welfare values can be divided into the dimensions having, loving

² Harry Girvetz gives the following definition of a welfare state: „The welfare state is the institutional outcome of the assumption by a society of legal and therefore formal and explicit responsibility for the basic well-being of all of its members” (Girvetz 1968: 512).

and being (cf. Allardt 1976). Following this concept the material living conditions of children form one element of the having-dimension of this population group, which in the following is called the economic welfare.

Using the approach of „mixed welfare production“ (cf. Kaufmann 1994, Evers/Olk 1996) the (economic) welfare of individuals – adults as well as children – is the result of a production process, which is including several sectors of society: state, market, non-profit-sector and informal sector (e.g. families). These four sectors follow their own logics; they have specific institutions and conditions in their access as well as particular potentials and problems. To give some simple examples: The market is characterized by competition and the logic of paying or not paying. Free access is granted for principally everyone (but only everyone who owns money!). The market can produce goods and services efficiently, but fails to fulfil non-monetary demands and to establish minimal standards of provisions in the living conditions of people. The state sector is at best able to produce public goods to which every citizen has access via citizenship rights, whereby the state is able to guarantee more or less sustainable equal living conditions. The disadvantage is what Habermas calls the ‘colonialisation of living environment’, for example by the state’s control, surveillance and heteronomy of its citizens via legal regulation (e.g. via social security laws). Within the non-profit sector especially voluntary associations such as charity organisations produce collective goods for their members as well as for non-members on the basis of solidarity – in an ideal case. Regarded as problematic is the unequal distribution of benefits and goods as well as the low degree of professionalism and efficiency. The informal sector is mainly represented by families, which play a crucial role for the (economic) welfare of children. Based on moral obligations welfare is produced via exchange processes between the family members, whereby it is only the family members themselves who benefit from these processes of welfare production. Especially for the (economic) welfare of children the family can be regarded as an important mediating institution, which influences to what extent welfare goods and services of other sectors reach children.

Following the approach of mixed welfare production it can be assumed, that the economic welfare of children is mainly produced or at least influenced by the labour market participation of the parents, public transfers of the state, social services of non-profit organisations and the distribution within the family.

3.2 Citizenship Theory

The second element of the analytic framework is the citizenship theory. One of the first who started to analyse citizenship was Thomas H. Marshall (cf. 1964). He figures out a gradual development of three dimensions of the citizenship status:

- civil citizenship rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, etc.,
- political citizenship rights such as the right to vote and the right to be elected and
- social citizenship rights.

Marshall shows that social citizenship rights emerged during the 20th century with the development of modern welfare states. In accordance to Marshall social rights cover the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society (cf. Marshall 1964: 82). The crucial point is that the three dimension of citizenship are densely interconnected, whereby social rights form the structural precondition for exercising civil and political rights. Only the complete access to *all* right dimensions makes people citizens in the meaning of being a full member of society. However, Marshall excludes children from his concept of citizenship. This is not surprising but shows the extensive marginalisation of children in this time. But for all that, citizenship theory can principally also be transferred to children. Hereby it is not intended to claim that children are like adults, and thus deserve the same rights as adults (cf. Cockburn 1998). It seems reasonable to speak of “partial citizenship” because it makes clear that children participate in some citizenship rights, and at the same time, they are excluded from others (cf. Roche 1999).

A partial citizenship wherein children are constructed as autonomous rights bearers of social citizenship rights in the sense of Marshall’s theory does not face any structural problems due to the fact that the CRC exactly guarantees these rights to children. Quite the contrary, this would lead further into the direction of the emancipation of this largely marginalised societal group. Using the citizenship theory of Thomas Marshall to constitute children as bearers of social rights means to acknowledge that children are autonomous claims-makers who have to be directly addressed within welfare state measures concerning their social security. Besides this, it is crucial for acknowledging children’s status as social citizens that neither the living circumstances of other societal groups nor other societal objectives form the central focus of according welfare state measures; herein the *living circumstances of children* have to be central.

3.3 Analytic framework: mixed welfare production and citizenship theory

Matching the concept of mixed welfare production and the theory of citizenship together makes it possible to figure out the position of children in the German welfare state with the following questions:

- From a welfare-productive point of view: In what manner does the German welfare state take responsibility for producing economic welfare of children and how is the relation to the contributions of other welfare producing sectors?
- From the perspective of citizenship theory: To what extent are children constructed as autonomous claims-makers and addressees of welfare state measures to secure their living conditions and in what manner are their living circumstances reflected in these measures?

4. Object of investigation

As mentioned at the beginning, the analysis of children's position in the German welfare state gains its dynamic because of the increasing influence of social investment strategies since the end of the 1990's. The increasing importance of new welfare state concepts and ideas in Germany is a reaction of the state to societal challenges such as the transformation of society towards a knowledge-based globalised economy.

The concept of the state as social investment state was developed by the British sociologist Anthony Giddens (cf. 1998) and deepened by the Danish welfare state researcher Gøsta Esping-Andersen to a „Child-Centred Social Investment Strategy“ (cf. Esping-Andersen 2002). Esping-Andersen argues that in a knowledge-based global economy human capital plays a crucial role as competition factor of national economies. Therefore, one of the main tasks of states is to invest in the creation of human capital of its citizens. Esping-Andersen follows the assumption that the ability of human beings to build up human capital is determined by their cognitive capabilities, which are mainly developed in early childhood. Because the development of cognitive capabilities of children can be negatively influenced by pathologies of the parents (e.g. drug or alcohol addiction), a lack of monetary resources and deficits in the cultural capital of the parents Esping-Andersen propagates a 'double strategy'. This double strategy is including the intent to consequently fight child poverty and to compensate deficits in the cultural capital of the parents. The latter shall be realised by a quantitative and qualitative expansion of facilities in the field of early childhood education and care, whereby the quantitative expansion of childcare facilities at the same time forms one element of the strategy to fight child poverty: By a sufficient provision of childcare facilities the conditions for combining family and work shall be improved so that especially (lone parent) mothers can participate more easily in the labour market and hence increase the family income. Above this Esping-Andersen suggests fighting the remaining child poverty via direct monetary transfers from the public purse (cf Esping-Andersen 2002).

The ideas of an investment-oriented welfare state conceptualisation gradually gain influence in Germany since the late 1990's, whereby this process does not take place in form of a

compelling adaption of this concept. This new, child and education-focused paradigm meets a welfare state logic, which first of all was aiming at the male breadwinner. Children were rarely conceptualised as autonomous claims-makers on welfare state benefits; the common construction of this population group in the German welfare state was the role of a dependent family member who had only indirect access to welfare state measures. Safeguarding the material living conditions of children should first and foremost be realised by the participation of the parents in the labour market. Hence, welfare state benefits as for example universal child allowances and social assistance were not targeted at the improvement of the material living conditions or the societal status of children, but institutionalised to support parents. Due to new social risks such as the increasing proportion of lone parent households (in most cases lone mother households) and changes at the labour market (e.g. the decline of life long full employment) the high child poverty rate at present is not surprising at all.

The influence of the social investment approach led particularly after 2002 to a changed policy via children and families in Germany. Following the assumption that investments in children will have a pay-off in future times, childhood gains more and more attention within the German welfare state and children are currently regarded as one of the central target groups of social policy. The “new” policy towards children and families was initiated by an evaluation of the former policy. The evaluation showed that compared to other OECD countries public expenditures for children and families in Germany are above the average (2.7% of GDP), while the efficiency of the political intervention is low (cf. Rürup/Gruescu 2003). Malte Ristau describes the situation in German as follows: „A low birth rate is accompanied by a low proportion of women in gainful work and a low level of education goes hand in hand with an increasing risk of living in poverty” (Ristau 2005: 18; translation M.H). Based on the evaluation report the German government identifies the low provision of social services and the dominance of monetary transfers as major reason for the failure of the former child and family policy. In accordance to this, the quantitative and qualitative expansion of childcare facilities and all-day-schools forms the core of the new child and family policy. Besides this in 2005 a special child allowance („Kinderzuschlag“) came into effect, whereby the German government explicitly intends to fight child poverty with this new measure (cf. BMFSFJ 2006: 62).

To what extent the increased importance of children and childhood within the logic of the German welfare state has also led to an increased orientation on the living conditions and the rights of children is only rarely researched. However, in the German and in the international state of research some important hints can be identified: For example Ruth Lister (cf. 2003) with view to England, Jane Jenson and Denis Saint-Martin (cf. 2003) with view to Canada and Thomas Olk (cf. 2007) with view to Germany point out the following

issue: Due to the focus on economic and future aims within the social investment approach there is the risk, that the increased importance of children and childhood is not related to an expansion of the rights of this population group in the here and now and that childhood is only used instrumentally to achieve other societal aims.

5. Findings

In my analysis on children's position in the German welfare state concerning measures to secure their material living conditions I focus on the level of policy output. This level includes intentions, legitimations and lines of reasoning of political measures and programs.³ Herein I analyse from a discourse analytic and reconstructive point of view (a) general political documents (e.g. federal coalition agreements) and (b) political documents in the field of policy for children and families (e.g. "National Action Plan for a Child-friendly Germany", "Kinderzuschlag"-law, speeches of the Federal Family Ministers, etc.) within the last decade.

As explained before, the analysis includes a welfare-productivistic and a citizenship perspective. From the citizenship perspective it shows that understanding children as citizens with their autonomous rights is becoming more and more part of political documents and speeches; the rights-based construction of children is significantly gaining in influence in the political field of the German government. However, a symbolical step like the inclusion of children's rights into the constitutional law – as it happened for example in Norway – is still explicitly refused.

Further, the German government argues that children have autonomous rights on measures to secure their material living within the social assistance. This is insofar true because children can be under some circumstances individual claims-makers on social assistance benefits⁴ or at least they can be considered as members of a household that receives social assistance benefits⁵. However, the needs for children within these legal regulations are (still) only derived from the needs of the adult population: Children until the age of 14 only receive 60% (208 € per month) and children between the age of 15 and 18 receive 80% (278 € per month) of the benefits for adults. The current Social Minister of Northrhine-Westphalia, Karl-Josef Laumann identifies the problem correctly: From his point of view the question remains why a 14 year old teenager shall receive only 60% of the food ration of an adult (cf. Sperber 2007: 6).

The situation within the legal social assistance regulation appears generally contradictory to the new child friendliness of the German welfare state: Although children and childhood

³ In contrast to the output level, policy outcome is focused on the level of effects of political measures, laws and programs in the living environment of citizens.

⁴ "Sozialhilfe": Social Security Statute Book 12

⁵ "Sozialgeld": Social Security Statute Book 2

gained importance in the German welfare state due to the influence of the social investment thinking, it does not come to a serious step into the direction of an appropriate support of parents to fulfil 'their' task to create a decent standard of living for their children (as propagated in Article 27 CRC). On the contrary, the level of provision in the legal regulations of the social assistance is declining since some years. This reduction comes from the integration of the social assistance of long-term unemployed and the social assistance for the poor in 2005. This reform ("Hartz-Reform") entails activating measures which aim at a better integration of long term unemployed and recipients of social assistance into the labour market. But at the same time, this reform is undoubtedly the biggest reduction in social expenditures since the modern German welfare state was founded. The problem from a child-centred perspective is that the consequences of this budgetary cutback can not be restricted to adult workers, but also affect the living conditions of the children of these workers – above all the low-paid workers. The statement of the federal government of Saxony-Anhalt concerning the high rate of child poverty in this federal state points out one of these current cutbacks: "The situation for children and youths, whose parents depend on benefits, has become worse in essential parts since the integration of the social assistance of long-term unemployed and the social assistance for the poor. For example special benefits for winter clothing and even for school enrolment were dropped" (Landtag von Sachsen-Anhalt 2007: 1; translation M.H.). A more differentiated view shows that the changed situation within the legal regulations of the social assistance has particularly led to reduced benefits for children above the age of 7 (cf. DPW 2004: 6). Due to this situation, more and more NGOs point out that social assistance benefits do not cover the material needs of children's daily life; following one of the leading German non-profit welfare organisations it can not be identified where and how the specific need of children and youths is considered within the social assistance regulations (cf. DPW 2004: 7). From the perspective of citizenship theory the social rights of children within the social assistance hence remain low developed second class rights compared to the rights of the adult population.

From the welfare productivistic point of view the analysis shows that the German welfare state tries explicitly to avoid that citizens make use of governmental measures like social assistance benefits. In the political field of Germany the idea that citizens shall be first of all responsible by themselves for their economic welfare gains more and more importance. Following this, the German welfare state emphasizes (more than before) the primary responsibility of parents for the (moral and) and economic welfare of their children. In an ideal case parents shall secure the living conditions of their children via gainful work or in case of unemployment they shall be pushed into the labour market via new and enforced measures. Therefore, also under the influence of the social investment paradigm the problem of child poverty is above all constructed as a subsequent consequence of income poverty of

the parents and less as a consequence of too low monetary transfers for an autonomous safeguarding of children's material living conditions from the public purse.

The reasons for a family income that is not sufficient to cover the needs of the complete family including children are seen by the German government particularly in a mix of the following factors:

- lacking possibilities to participate in the labour market/moderate development of income since the end of the 1990's,
- insufficient childcare facilities and related to this a high exclusion of (especially lone parent) mothers from the labour market,
- low educational status.

The two last aspects are part of the child and family policy and so they form a focal point of political action in this field. According to the awareness of the issues by the German Government as described above, the fight against child poverty is mainly intended by (a) *improving the conditions for mother's integration into gainful work*. From the child-centred perspective, as followed in this presentation, this means that the economic welfare of children is still highly dependent on the ability of parents to achieve an appropriate exchange for their working power at the labour market. In this form of welfare arrangement children are pushed even closer to the logic of inequality as produced within the market.

The second basis of the strategy to fight child poverty is (b) *the improvement of children's chances according their access to education*. The German government propagates that by improving the equality of chances within the educational system the reproduction of social inequality can be reduced, individual life chances are extended and the future national economy is strengthened. The fact that in given capitalistic societies education minimizes the risk of unemployment and therefore the risk of income poverty is well known and proved by empirical studies. But from a child-centred perspective the following problem remains: Political measures aiming at improved educational chances of children can reduce the risk of living in poverty only with regard to the child's future! A poor kid will remain a poor kid, who is excluded from participation in society and suffering other consequences of income poverty in the here and now, although his or her access to education is improved.

This way of thinking within the German government is part of a new course in the policy for children and families: Before the influence of the social investment approach the main focus of child and family policy was on monetary transfers, whereby social services were hardly developed. This deficit shall now be solved by a massive quantitative and qualitative expansion of social services (e.g. early childcare facilities). Herein it is problematic that the current expansion of social services leads to a decreasing importance of monetary transfers in the field of child and family policy: In their argumentation the German government is

constructing more and more a dualism between money and services and is thereby de-emphasizing the meaning of monetary transfers. This appears completely senseless due to the fact that the reducing effects of public (re-)distribution on child poverty are well-known and proved empirically (cf. e.g. UNICEF 2005, Böhmer/Heimer 2008).

Although the 'new' policy for families explicitly focuses on improving the infrastructure for children (and families) in their strategy to fight child poverty a new special child allowance ("Kinderzuschlag") came into effect in 2005 with the purpose to reduce the rate of children in poverty by direct monetary transfers. However, a detailed analysis shows that with this measure mainly other motives are aimed: The special child allowance contains up to 140 € per month per child and is transferred to low-income parents, who "can finance their own living costs with their income but not the living costs of their children und therefore without the Kinderzuschlag would depend on social assistance in the future" (BMFSFJ 2006: 62; translation M.H.).⁶ So this new measure is only reaching the living circumstances of a small and very specific group of children and failing to reach wider population groups living in poverty. Although with the Kinderzuschlag it is intended to fight child poverty, children are again only the precondition and not the targeted subjects of this social political intervention. It is not surprising that within this measure the specific needs of children are not in the centre; above all it is intended to avoid that further population groups "slip down" into social assistance, because focusing on social assistance statistic is one option to determine who is "poor" in our society (and therefore social assistance is under political and medial attention). Hence, argued from a citizenship perspective the introduction of the "Kinderzuschlag" does not lead to an expansion of sustainable and autonomous social rights of children to measures of social security as it is guaranteed in Article 26 of the CRC.

6. Conclusion

Based on the empirical results: What position do children actually have in the current German welfare state regarding measures to secure their material living conditions? The German welfare state under the principle of social investment does principally regard children and childhood and hence the problem of child poverty as one focal point of social political intervention – especially within the field of child and family policy. Herein, the contributions of the German welfare state do above all aim at improving the infrastructure for children and families. Following the ideas of the 'child-centred social investment strategy' the expenditures for the expansion of education and care are understood as investments, which will (or shall) have a pay-off in future times; whereas a further expansion of monetary transfers, however, is becoming more and more unimportant. A basic income, which is in

⁶ Until the end of 2007 this measure was even limited to a duration of maximum 36 months.

accordance to the ideas and principles of the CRC, addressing directly children and therefore adapted to *their* material living conditions does not play any important role in the political discourse within the current German welfare state yet. Children are still a population group without true social citizenship rights and so only 'second class' society members.

But there are debates in the ministry of child and family policy to increase the universal child allowance for the third child and further children and to expand the Kinderzuschlag on more population groups. In the scientific field the idea, that only improving children's access to education is not enough to fight child poverty, gains gradually (and slowly) influence.

Following the child-focused perspective, as presented in this paper, the expansion of childcare facilities and the improved access of children to school education must be accomplished by a child-centred expansion of universal and especially of targeted monetary transfers to de facto create equal life chances for all children, to fight child poverty and to realise children's rights to a decent standard of living, which enables them to participate in the present society. To what extent the economic and future-oriented paradigm of the social investment state is applicable for this purpose remains – as already Lister, Jenson and Saint-Martin and Olk mentioned – questionable or even doubtful. However, maybe the increased importance and attention that children and childhood receive in the German welfare state due to the social investment paradigm can be a starting point, from where the focus is really shifted towards children and hereby towards their specific needs and autonomous social, political, cultural and civic rights. But for this, it is obligatory to shift from the current instrumental-economic logic of social investment to a consequent logic of children's rights.

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